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Housing
Element

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Issues of Local Significance

The City of Carmel-by-the-Sea has always been proud of its residential character and heritage. All General Plan Elements strive to preserve, promote and strengthen this residential character. The Housing Element, because of its special focus on the provision of dwellings and neighborhood stability, plays a vital role in this effort. At this period in the developmental history of Carmel-by-the-Sea, the following issues are of particular importance. These issues are the focus of the 1994 Housing Element's policies and programs.

- o Maintain the Character of the Residential District. Much of the City's housing is built of older cottages and small homes on small and medium sized lots. These structures contribute to the human scale and the "village in a forest" character so often identified with Carmel. However, aging homes and increasing property values encourage the building of improvements, additions and replacement structures. The City must plan for this "recycling" of existing housing so that property improvement is welcomed as a positive contribution to the community. Through Housing Element Policies the City must coordinate infrastructure needs, health and safety improvements and the preservation of the community's design character.
- o Preserve and Expand Housing Opportunities in the Downtown Area. Multifamily housing and mixed-use projects (second floor residential apartments over first floor commercial uses) are an underutilized asset within the commercial district. Such housing keeps the downtown vital and helps support the economic goals of the City. Preserving existing apartments and encouraging the development of new and converted apartments can add significantly to the character of the City and expand the variety of dwelling choices for residents.
- o Provide Housing and Services for Special Needs Groups. Providing affordable housing for residents who have low, moderate or fixed-incomes is a community objective. Meeting the housing needs of the elderly on fixed-incomes is particularly important because this group is often most directly affected by changes in the housing market.
- o Protect the Stability of Neighborhoods. Unoccupied second homes, transient rentals, and the isolation felt by many single-occupant senior households all contribute to a loss of stability within neighborhoods. Rebuilding a sense of community and "connectedness" among local residents is a significant housing issue for Carmel-by-the-Sea.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal G3-1 Preserve the existing single-family residential housing stock and provide for an increase in the number of housing units.

Objective 03-1 Establish programs to assist in the procurement of financial assistance to homeowners for maintaining and improving existing housing units.

P3-1 The City shall collect, organize and distribute information on rehabilitation assistance available through Monterey County to homeowners, housing providers, community groups and the building trades.

P3-2 Direct financial assistance for housing rehabilitation from outside public and private sources shall be pursued by the City with particular emphasis on assistance to senior households on fixed-incomes.

Objective 03-2 Assist homeowners in the identification of appropriate structural, maintenance and seismic improvements to meet health and safety standards.

P3-3 Continue to implement the Building Codes including the Historic Building Code to preserve and upgrade structures.

P3-4 Offer educational materials and special inspection services to homeowners to help identify potential health and safety problems and opportunities for home improvements.

Objective 03-3 Continue to work cooperatively with regional agencies to augment infrastructure in support of housing growth.

P3-5 Infrastructure limitations (e.g. sewer, water, roads) that affect the ability to serve new housing units shall be monitored on an annual basis.

P3-6 The City shall participate in regional infrastructure plans and decision-making to ensure that local needs are met through appropriate capacity and allocation decisions.

P3-7 The City shall support new or upgraded infrastructure that meets local and regional needs and which is financially and environmentally sound.

Objective 03-4 Establish local standards, procedures and ordinances to guide the improvement and use of local infrastructure in a manner that provides adequate capacity for existing and new housing, yet preserves and improves the character of the City.

P3-8 Local infrastructure will be designed and allocated to meet reasonable growth projections.

P3-9 New housing on existing subdivided lots of 4,000 square feet or larger shall continue to be encouraged by the City as a first priority in ordinances, processes and resource allocations.

P3-10 Fragment lots of less than 4,000 square feet shall not be recognized as new legal building sites.

P3-11 Existing roads shall be retained at current widths and alignments except where improved capacity for new housing is essential, significant safety problems are evident, or opportunities exist for less environmental damage.

P3-12 The City shall prepare a comprehensive road and drainage study to coordinate Clean Water Act compliance and relevant housing development standards (e.g. site coverage and site drainage).

P3-13 The undergrounding of utilities shall be required as a means of promoting safety and aesthetics when housing is improved, replaced or newly constructed.

P3-14 The City shall review ordinances, guidelines and practices related to fire protection and fire suppression in new and remodeled homes to balance safety and cost while minimizing risk.

Objective 03-5 Maintain the single-family residential housing stock in the R-1 District for occupancy by permanent residents through the City's land use ordinances and decisions.

P3-15 The City will continue to prohibit short-term, transient rentals and timeshares for all housing in the R-1 District.

P3-16 Approved R-1 Motels will be preserved as part of the City's economic base but will not be allowed to increase units.

P3-17 Approved R-1 Motels shall be allowed to convert to permanent single-family use if desired by the property owner.

Goal G3-2 Preserve and expand housing opportunities for low and moderate income households, senior citizens and other special needs groups while prohibiting discrimination in the sale or rental of housing.

Objective 03-6 Provide housing units that are accessible to the handicapped or are readily converted for use by handicapped persons through the implementation of planning and building codes.

P3-18 Recognize the special structural requirements for meeting handicapped needs and retain flexibility in the design review process so as to provide for these needs.

P3-19 Continue to upgrade City facilities to address handicapped needs in public rights-of-way near new developments through direct City actions and through conditions of approval for private projects.

Objective 03-7 Promote the development of increased housing for senior citizens.

P3-20 Proposals for joint public/private senior housing projects should continue to be encouraged.

P3-21 Surplus public land should be considered for opportunities to develop low-cost senior housing.

Objective 03-8 Explore new opportunities to encourage affordable housing and adopt or amend ordinances to facilitate provision of affordable housing through the private market.

P3-23 The City shall continue to offer enhanced density bonuses (beyond State minimums) and the potential for increased floor area in multifamily residential projects that provide affordable housing.

P3-24 The City will establish a reduced parking requirement and reduced requirements for off-site improvements for projects that include affordable housing units.

P3-25 The subordinate unit ordinance shall be amended to allow new rental subordinate units on lots of 8,000 square feet or greater in the R-1 District.

P3-26 Continue to allow emergency and transitional shelter in schools, churches and other quasi-public facilities.

Objective O3-9 Governmental constraints on the provision of affordable housing will be reduced or eliminated.

P3-27 Projects containing affordable housing will have planning fees reduced in proportion to the percentage of affordable units contained in the project.

P3-28 Projects with affordable housing will receive fast-track processing by scheduling their review ahead of other projects.

P3-29 The City will allow approved affordable housing units to be converted to market-rate units after twenty years to improve the economics of providing affordable units by the private market.

P3-30 Projects containing affordable housing will receive priority for water resources and applications for such projects will continue to be accepted for processing during water moratoria.

Objective O3-10 Continue public education and monitoring programs as a means of promoting affordable housing and reviewing the degree of success of the City's housing efforts.

P3-31 Affordable units approved by the City shall be monitored on an annual basis to confirm the number of units and their occupancy rates.

P3-32 The City shall collect and distribute information on housing programs (first-time home buyer reduced interest loans, Section-8 vouchers, etc.) to assist the public in learning about available options for housing assistance.

Goal G3-3 Preserve all existing residential units in the Commercial and R-4 Districts and encourage the development of new multifamily housing.

Objective 03-11 Continue to encourage mixed-use developments (second floor housing over first floor commercial uses) as a preferred development form contributing to the village character in the Commercial District.

P3-33 The City will encourage mixed-use developments through its ordinances and permit processes.

P3-34 Proposals to convert existing second floor commercial space to residential units will be strongly encouraged by allowing a reduced parking requirement and fast-track processing.

Objective 03-12 The City shall preserve the quantity and variety of housing in the downtown.

P3-35 The City will annually monitor the number of housing units established and continue implementing ordinances that protect all housing units in the Commercial and R-4 Districts from conversion or loss.

P3-36 Apartment and condominium units shall be reserved for permanent housing and short-term transient rentals will continue to be prohibited.

P3-37 Newly constructed floor space at the second floor shall continue to be reserved for residential units and the City shall continue to prohibit conversion of existing second-floor residential floor space to commercial use.

P3-38 The City will continue to prevent conversions of apartments to condominiums to protect the supply of rental housing stock in the downtown.

Goal G3-4 Protect the stability of residential neighborhoods by preserving the quality of housing and promoting year-round occupancy.

Objective 03-13 Preserve and protect the scale and character of established neighborhoods while encouraging property improvement.

P3-39 The City will continue to use appropriate height, coverage and floor area standards to ensure that new construction is compatible with existing neighborhoods.

P3-40 Clear design guidelines should be adopted and used to facilitate an understanding of community design issues, yet should remain flexible to allow for creative solutions.

P3-41 Projects not meeting adopted design guidelines should be reviewed by the Planning Commission and designs found incompatible with, or insensitive to, the existing neighborhood character should be avoided.

Objective 03-14 Promote public awareness and foster pride in the history and culture of each neighborhood through historic preservation programs.

P3-42 Use information gathered through preservation programs to help identify architectural elements of community character.

P3-43 Use public education programs to improve public understanding of the City's rich cultural and design heritage as a means of encouraging compatible housing design within existing neighborhoods.

Objective 03-15 Encourage and support outreach programs to promote neighborhood involvement, stability and a stronger sense of community.

P3-44 Support neighborhood safety through continuing the Neighborhood Watch program.

P3-45 Encourage creative outreach services such as the St. Bernard Program, Meals-on-Wheels and The Bookmobile.

P3-46 Help coordinate home-sharing programs offered through local non-profit agencies to provide a means for seniors to remain independent.

Goal G3-5 Provide adequate sites for the development of housing for all citizens.

Objective 03-16 Maintain City zoning standards for residential densities that are above the average within the region to encourage the development of Carmel's fair share housing needs.

P3-47 Provide appropriate densities for single-family residential housing in the R-1 District at eleven (11) units per acre.

P3-48 Provide appropriate densities for multifamily residential housing in the Commercial and R-4 Districts at thirty-three (33) units per acre.

P3-49 Preserve existing subdivision patterns and the character of neighborhoods when land is annexed from Monterey County.

Objective 03-17 The City will support energy conservation programs to reduce the energy needs of housing and to reduce housing costs.

P3-50 Adopt subdivision standards encouraging lots to be oriented with an east-west axis to maximize southern exposures and improve access to sunlight.

P3-51 Continue to encourage mixed-use housing development that minimizes auto-dependence for work commutes and shopping.

P3-52 Continue to offer firewood from urban forest maintenance activities to the public as an auxiliary home heating fuel.

P3-53 Ensure that new construction complies with Title 24 Energy Conservation Regulations.

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